DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 462 553 CE 082 933

AUTHOR Valvasori, Joe
TITLE Targeted Training: An Integrated Initiative.
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Consultation on Career Development (NATCON) (26th, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, June 24-26, 2000).
AVAILABLE FROM For full text: http://www.contactpoint.ca/html/natcon-conat/2000/abs/abs-00-19.h tml.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Learning; Building Trades; Child Care Occupations; Child Caregivers; Computer Assisted Instruction; Computer Literacy; Counseling Services; Definitions; Delivery Systems; Demonstration Programs; Educational Principles; Educational Trends; Employment Potential; *Employment Programs; Employment Qualifications; Entrepreneurship; Foreign Countries; Holistic Approach; Information Technology; Integrated Curriculum; Job Search Methods; *Job Training; Labor Force Development; Outcomes of Education; Postsecondary Education; Program Development; Program Effectiveness; *School Business Relationship; Skill Development; Training Objectives; Trend Analysis; *Unemployment; Vocational Education; *Welfare Recipients; Workshops
IDENTIFIERS *Ontario; Welfare to Work Programs

ABSTRACT

The Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF) in Toronto, Ontario (Canada) offers 12 targeted training programs that have successfully helped "hard-to-serve" clients return to the workforce. Compared with traditional training, targeted training has a much narrower focus and adapts quickly to industry trends to meet employers' changing demands. LEF's targeted training programs fall into the following general categories: industrial skills, early childhood assistant, and computer training. Since their inception, LEF's programs have developed and adapted in response to local employers' changing needs and feedback. In addition, LEF integrates self-marketing training through the targeted skills training courses. The self-marketing training is delivered through 4-day workshops that build on the "hard skills" developed in targeted training by focusing on the "soft skills" and motivation necessary for a successful job search. In 1998, LEF began an Ontario Works Demonstration during which 501 social assistance recipients were able to access LEF's assessment, counseling, skills training, and job search programs..Of the 501 participants, 363 (72%) received skills training and 138 (28%) were placed directly in the program's job search component. Within 2 years, 242 participants had moved into employment and 129 of the 158 training graduates moved into jobs that were directly related to their training and paid starting hourly wages of $6.85-$25. (MN)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 462 553

Les actes du CONAT 2000 NATCON Papers

Targeted Training: An Integrated Initiative

Joe Valvasori
The Learning Enrichment Foundation
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

J Valvasori

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Copyright © 2000 Joe Valvasori
The author owns the copyright of this article. If you would like to photocopy or reprint this article, or sections of it, please forward your request to: Joe Valvasori, 116 Industry Street, Toronto, ON, Canada M6M 4L8. Telephone: (416) 769.0830 ext. 2107

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CE 082 933

INTRODUCTION

The past decade has seen tremendous changes in labour force development. Many factors, including technological advances and globalization, have increased employer demand for skilled workers and left many training providers struggling to keep up with the pace of change. This same period has seen the growth of targeted or customized training as an effective means of helping the unemployed re-enter the workforce.

Traditional training is general rather than focused on a particular job. While this type of training may have wider applications, it fails to provide graduates with many of the specific skills employers are looking for. Targeted training, however, has a much narrower focus and adapts quickly to industry trends in order to meet the changing demands of employers. Sherri Torjman of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy explains that the intent of targeted training "is simply to find a work placement for the unemployed who then acquire skills on the job. Rather the intent is to ensure that the individual is suitably qualified for the job prior to going to work" (Torjman 1999, 10).

The Learning Enrichment Foundation operates a variety of targeted training programs that have been very successful in helping clients, even those typically classified as "hard to serve," return to the workforce.

TARGETED TRAINING: PROGRAMS

L.E.F. currently offers 12 different skills-training programs in addition to Literacy and ESL courses. Upon completion of a training course, participants also receive self-marketing training to prepare them for their job search. The skills-training programs fall into three general categories: Industrial Skills, Early Childhood Assistant, and Computer Training. A brief outline of how these programs have developed and adapted since their inception will show how L.E.F. training is targeted to existing jobs and future industry developments.

INDUSTRIAL SKILLS

The Industrial Skills program began as Construction and Renovations training in 1986. The course was developed to

address the construction industry's need for skilled workers and provide L.E.F. clients with skills necessary to re-enter the workforce. Originally, the course consisted of carpentry, plumbing, electrical repair, drywalling, framing, and renovation techniques. When new legislation required employees to be familiar with Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, it was added to the course curriculum. As the construction boom faded in the early 1990s, however, Industrial Skills adapted to the industry trends. The focus of the training shifted to the growing number of warehousing positions available. This resulted in the addition of forklift training, basic computer training, first aid, and shipping and receiving to the course. Based on employer feedback, health and safety instruction was added in 1998.

The thousands of employer relationships that L.E.F. maintains through the Action Centre for Employment are essential to ensuring that the course content remains on the leading edge of industry trends, but any changes are carefully considered. L.E.F. Training Manager Peter Rapsey states that changes to course curriculum are considered only "if skills added in training are beneficial to both clients and employers." In some instances, these employer relationships have progressed beyond providing feedback to training partnerships. In March 1999 a telecommunications company, impressed with the quality of Industrial Skills graduates, established a training program on site at The Learning Enrichment Foundation. Training graduates are hired by the company and trained as cabling technicians.

Today, the Industrial Skills course remains one of the most successful skills-training programs offered at The Learning Enrichment Foundation. The course is nine weeks long and offers graduates theory, at least 28 hours' practical experience, and certification in both Counter Balance and Raymond Reach forklift operation. Graduates can also receive certification in WHIMIS, CSAO Health and Safety, Shipping and Receiving, CSAO Propane Handling, St. John Ambulance First Aid, and Basic Computer Instruction. Like all L.E.F. skills-training programs, Industrial Skills trains clients for existing jobs. There is a projected increase in Material Handlers positions of 26,219 by the year 2001, at a wage range of $23,000 to $40,000 per year. In addition, projected increase in Shipping and Receiving positions for the same period, is 15,123, at a wage range of $19,000 to $33,500 per year.

EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSISTANT TRAINING

L.E.F's Early Childhood Assistant (ECA) training is perhaps the best example of combining classroom instruction with "real world" experience. Over twenty years ago The Learning Enrichment Foundation recognized that accessible child-care is essential to those attempting to re-enter the workforce. In 1980, L.E.F. began operating child-care centres across Toronto to meet this need and today has 13 licenced centres and one ESL nursery. The next logical step was to use the experience and expertise gained through the operation of these facilities to create a program to train those interested in child-care. The result was Early Childhood Assistant training, which began in 1989. From the outset ECA training has capitalized on its connections with the industry to keep the curriculum relevant to both employers and clients. During training, three days per week are spent on-site at an L.E.F. centre where staff set and monitor weekly goals and provides hands-on training to complement the classroom theory. The on-site training involves a mentoring component in which staff members are matched with a client, based on the client's experience and learning style. Trainees are never considered as part of the child:staff ratio.

The curriculum for the course is adjusted to meet the needs of employers and the clients. As Faye Jose, manager of the Early Childhood Assistant program explains, "Child-care is a relatively small field, and this provides the opportunity for extensive feedback from employers. We use this information to provide our graduates with all the skills employers are looking for." Due to a growing number of supply positions available in the field, ECA training added instruction on the completion of time sheets and attendance forms to the course. Also, during the training clients complete a six-week placement with one age group and then are switched to a different age group for an additional six-week placement. This is followed by a placement outside L.E.F. in another child-care facility. This strategy allows graduates to present potential employers with experience in at least two different age groups and references from three different staff members as well as a reference from the class instructor.

Client needs have also been addressed through additions to the curriculum. In 1997, L.E.F. recognized that many clients in the Early Childhood Assistant training had child-care issues of their own. A home care component was added to provide graduates

with the opportunity to provide care for other children as well as their own from home.

The combination of relevant classroom training and workplace experience has given the Early Childhood Assistant program an 80% success rate in employment in child-care. The attention to industry trends and client needs will ensure that success continues.

COMPUTER TRAINING

Like Industrial Skills and Early Childhood Assistant training, L.E.F's Computer Training programs were designed in response to both employer demands and client needs. In the early 1990s the rapidly expanding use of computers in offices resulted in an increasing demand for computer-literate employees. In turn, computer literacy became a prerequisite for office and administrative positions. In order to assist employers and clients in search of these positions, L.E.F. started an "Introduction to Computers" training course in 1990. This course was instructor led and taught basic hardware and Word and WordPerfect software packages. In 1994, with MS Office already the largest selling office software, L.E.F. approached Microsoft and proposed a training partnership. Microsoft agreed, and that year L.E.F. was designated the first non-profit Microsoft Solution Provider and Certified Training Organization in Canada.

This partnership provides The Learning Enrichment Foundation with industry information and projections on future developments from the world's leading software company, and also resulted in additional L.E.F. computer training programs. In 1994, L.E.F. began Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) training. However, employer feedback and client need again resulted in changes to course curriculum. The MCSE course proved difficult for clients lacking sufficient knowledge of hardware and software. In addition, many employers stated that only parts of the MCSE designation were necessary for the positions they were hiring for. L.E.F's response was to create a Windows NT & Hardware course that addressed these issues.

The last year has seen further changes and additions to the Computer Training programs at The Learning Enrichment Foundation. Employers are increasingly looking for employees

with a demonstrated ability to learn by themselves. To provide clients with an advantage in this regard, MS Office training was altered in 1999 to be offered as computer based/instructor assisted as well as instructor led. This provides graduates with the ability to show potential employers they are willing and able to learn and work with minimal supervision.

In 2000 L.E.F. has become one of four Canadian regional training centres for 3Com and is offering a NetPrep course. This training, which is tremendously popular in the United States, will provide graduates with an in-depth understanding of the theory, hardware, and software of computer networking, and an opportunity for certification as an Associate and Senior Network Specialist. The appeal of this course is it is "platform neutral," meaning the training is not restricted to the products of a single manufacturer, and is applicable industry-wide. The course will satisfy industry demands for employees with networking knowledge of multiple platforms. A major telecommunications company has already shown tremendous interest in the NetPrep program.

Graduates of L.E.F. computer training programs will have no shortage of employment opportunities. The IT industry is expected to double in size by 2004. There is a projected increase in administrative clerks of 7,309 positions by 2001, at a wage range of $18,500 to $36,500 per year. In addition, the projected increase in general office clerical positions for the same period is 8,273, at a wage range of $16,000 to $48,000 per year. These positions are filled in virtually all industries.

SELF-MARKETING TRAINING

Self-Marketing training is integrated through the skills-training courses and is designed to build on the "hard skills" taught in other training by focusing on the "soft skills" and motivation necessary in a successful job search. In the Self-Marketing training a facilitator leads a series of activities and group workshops that provide participants with direction and motivation. Day 1 involves an introduction to the Action Centre for Employment and Self-Marketing. On Day 2, workshops help participants identify individual skills, and teach them how to market these skills to employers. Group activities also show participants the many possible industries that employ their particular job target and encourage them to create an inclusive

target market. Day 3 consists of activities designed to build participant esteem and help them overcome the fears associated with returning to the workforce. Day 4 addresses barriers to employment, both real and perceived. Facilitators conduct exercises to show participants how to overcome these barriers and take personal responsibility for their job search. The final day deals with communication skills. Participants learn how to communicate effectively with employers in interviews and over the telephone and also receive instruction on résumés and cover letters.

The Self-Marketing curriculum is tailored to the needs of individuals and the group as a whole. Before starting the sessions, counsellors and training instructors meet to discuss the data collected through the initial assessment and plan the workshops based on this information. In addition, clients with specific barriers can receive additional individual counselling to address these issues. Targeting the job-search training in this manner is necessary when dealing with clients who have had an extended absence from the workforce. Those who have been unemployed for a long time often require more intensive self-esteem building, instruction on interview skills, and motivation, in order to successfully conduct a work search.

Upon completion of Self-Marketing, participants are required to have completed a target market list that contains the company name, address, phone number, and contact name of at least 100 employers in their target industry. This list is necessary for the next phase of the job search and is expanded regularly.

Participants then take the skills learned in Self-Marketing into the A.C.E. Call Centre. From 9 a.m. to noon, Monday to Friday, they contact employers from their target market list and uncover employment opportunities in the "hidden" job market—job vacancies not advertised elsewhere. Rather than searching for only their particular job target, participants offer employers the free matching service A.C.E. provides for any and all positions available. This maximizes the opportunities for all participants. When a job vacancy is uncovered, one of the A.C.E. Call Centre coaches takes the relevant details and, if possible, makes an immediate match to a participant in the call centre and arranges an interview date and time. If an immediate match is not available, a copy of the job lead is sent to the A.C.E. Client Matching Department. This department consists of four staff and is responsible for scheduling interviews with employers,

interviewing interested participants, and matching qualified candidates to job openings. Matchers also follow up with employers and participants after interviews and complete the necessary paperwork when someone is hired.

Besides connecting qualified clients to suitable positions, the Client Matching Department also provides L.E.F. with constant contact with various industries and gives valuable feedback on current employer needs as well as jobs they expect they will be hiring for in the future. This feedback enables L.E.F. to alter the curriculum of the training programs, and develop new training programs based on employer demand and employer projections of future hiring needs. Employer information is stored in a database. Currently L.E.F. has over 10,000 employers on file, and this information is updated constantly.

The common elements of all L.E.F. skills training courses are the strong contacts with employers in the field, attention to employer and client feedback, and the ability to quickly adapt curriculum to employer and client needs. The Self-Marketing training provides the necessary job-search skills, and the Action Centre for Employment provides a proven work-search program. In addition, the Action Centre for Employment provides L.E.F. with the hiring projections of thousands of employers. This allows training to be developed to meet the demand as it surfaces. As will be shown in the next section, this integrated model is highly effective in assisting even the long-term unemployed.

TARGETED TRAINING: RESULTS

In August 1998, an Ontario Works Demonstration Project began at The Learning Enrichment Foundation. The project gave 500 social assistance recipients the opportunity to move through the integrated model and access L.E.F.'s assessment, counselling, skills training, and job-search programs.

During the assessment and registration for the demonstration project, participants completed an Employment Action Plan and also an Ontario Works Program Application. These documents contain personal and employment-related information about the participants. In addition, L.E.F. employment counsellors accumulated further information from participants through multiple counselling sessions. From these combined

sources, it was possible to develop a demographic profile of the participants. Although the project called for 500 participants, an administrative oversight resulted in an extra client being registered, and therefore the demographic statistics deal with a number of 501. Sadly, a participant passed away during the pilot, leaving 500.

It must be noted, however, that the participants provided much of this information themselves. The only information provided by Toronto Social Services were the names, addresses, postal codes, and phone numbers on the referral forms. Therefore, the availability and accuracy of this information was entirely dependent of the willingness of the participant to provide it.

From this information, at the outset of the pilot the average demonstration project participant was 39.4 years old, was a high school graduate, and had been unemployed for 3.7 years. Besides this extended absence from the workforce, more than one of every five participants was struggling with an additional barrier to employment. Overall, the participants in the project represented what could be classified as "harder to serve"—long-term unemployed who required multiple interventions to successfully return to the workforce.

An integral part of the project was skills training. During the L.E.F. assessment, counsellors would recommend relevant training programs targeted to existing jobs based on the existing skills, career direction, and employment history of participants. Of the 501 participants, 363 (72%) received skills training during the pilot. The remaining 138 (28%) were determined to be job-ready and went directly to the job search portion of the program.

Under the Demonstration Project L.E.F. offered eight different training programs to provide participants with the skills necessary to successfully return to the workforce. Each included two weeks of Self-Marketing training. These training programs were Early Childhood Assistant, Basic Computer, MS Components, MS Office, AccPac, MCSE, Widows NT & Hardware, and Industrial Skills.

A unique aspect of the Demonstration Project was the availability of community placement, which was utilized by 182 (36.3%) participants. The training programs ran continuously throughout the pilot, but depending on capacity and when

participants completed registration, they might have had to wait for the next session. If participants were waiting for a training session to begin or had completed training but lacked work experience, they were given the opportunity to gain valuable work experience within the organization. The community placement would be in a field relevant to the participant's training and career goals. For example, if a participant was awaiting Industrial Skills training, the community placement would be with the Woodworks program or the L.E.F. Maintenance department. If the participant was awaiting MS Office training, the placement would be with L.E.F. administration in Client Services.

Overall, attendance and participation in the training programs during the Demonstration Project was excellent. Data reveals that only seven participants dropped out of the training courses. Of these, three were from the MCSE course, one from Hardware NT, one from MS Office, and two from Industrial Skills.

As of January 19, 2000, The Learning Enrichment Foundation was aware of 242 participants who had moved into employment. Of these, 158 (65.3%) were graduates of L.E.F. training programs. An examination of the employment data shows that 129 of the 158 training graduates, or 82%, moved into jobs that were directly related to their training program. The data also reveals that 87% of the training graduates' jobs were full-time, and only 4% of the positions had a contracted start and end date. Starting wages ranged from $6.85 to $25.00 per hour, with an average starting wage of $10.00 per hour.

A demographic profile of the 158 training graduates who moved into employment is also available and can be compared to the demographics of the 500 as a whole. With this information we can compare the demographic profile of the 158 training graduates to the 501 Demonstration Project participants as a whole. A comparison of the average ages entering the pilot shows virtually no differences between the two, with the average age of the 158 training graduates 0.9 years younger than the 501 as a whole.

Comparing workforce attachment data also reveals no significant difference between the two groups. On average, the 158 training graduates had been unemployed for 3.6 years, while the average length of time unemployed for the 501 was 3.7 years. When

new Canadians are removed, the average for the 158 climbs to 4.1 years, compared to 4.5 years for the 501.

The average level of education for both groups was secondary school. However, 6.1% more of the 158 training graduates had a university education, and 3.7% more had received their education outside of Canada.

As for barriers to employment, the 158 training graduates identified 3.5% more barriers than the 501 as a whole (figure below).

Demographic profile

	Total: 501	Training grads: 158
Male	63.00%	53%
Female	37.00%	47%
Ages (entering pilot)		
18–24	5.20%	8.90%
25–34	27.40%	26.80%
35–44	36.30%	35.70%
45–54	24.80%	24.20%
55+	6.30%	4.50%
Average age	39.4 years	38.5 years
Workforce attachment		
2 years or less	47.10%	52.80%
3–5 years	30.20%	24.80%
6–9 years	17.60%	17.80%
10+ years	5.20%	4.50%
Average number of years unemployed	3.7 years	3.6 years
Subtract new Canadians	4.5 years	4.1 years
Identified barriers to employment	21.80%	25.30%
Education		
Grade 8 or less	3.80%	2.60%
Grade 9–11	22.10%	23.20%
Grade 12–13	35.20%	37.10%
College or technical school	19.90%	13.90%
University	19.00%	25.10%
Educated outside of Canada	25.40%	29.10%

A comparison of the demographic profiles of the 158 training graduates and the 501 participants as a whole reveals no significant differences between the two. The 158 training graduates who completed L.E.F.'s skills training and job-search programs and successfully moved into employment were also long-term unemployed who struggled with multiple barriers to employment. The success of these training graduates proves the ability of L.E.F.'s training programs in helping even "hard to serve" clients re-enter the workforce. The fact that 82% of the positions were directly related to the participant's training is a credit to the curriculum of the programs and reveals the effectiveness of targeting training to existing jobs. Finally, the fact that 87% of the positions the training graduates were hired for were full-time with an average starting wage of $10.00 per hour shows that targeted training, combined with a proven job-search program, can successfully move the long-term unemployed into quality employment.

The speed of changes in labour force development will only increase in coming years. Training providers must first ensure their programs have the flexibility to adapt to industry trends and then work to keep curriculum relevant. As Sherri Torjman notes, targeted training "responds to both dimensions of the new labour market. It is an example of self-investment using a flexible delivery method. As such, it has much broader application that simply helping welfare recipients or the underemployed find a job. Customized training can be used to upgrade employee skills on an ongoing basis" (Torjman 1999, 18). The Learning Enrichment Foundation is committed to providing targeted training that is responsive to industry trends and meeting the needs of both employers and clients.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Torjman, Sherri. "Reintegrating the Unemployed Through Customized Training." Presentation. CSLS Conference on the Structural Aspects of Unemployment in Canada, 1999.